



Date: May 27, 2004  
Contact: Lisa Osborn, Fire Prevention Specialist, 406-657-6200, ext. 224

### **Wildland Fire Danger Exists; Please Use Caution**

Fire experts are predicting another severe fire season, and advise outdoor recreationists and homeowners to take extra precautions.

The recent rainfall was welcome, but it did not reverse the effects of our sixth straight year of drought. Live fuel moisture levels are so low that even above-average levels of precipitation this spring and summer would do little to reduce the fire danger. So far this year we've received only about half the normal amount of precipitation, and as of mid-May, 35 wildland fires had already burned about 3,200 acres in Montana.

Although we can't do much to prevent fires from lightning strikes, we can reduce the chance of human-caused fires. Homeowners can also take steps to protect their property from the threat of wildland fires.

Even the smallest spark has the potential to cause significant damage, so always crush smokes dead out; never leave a campfire unattended; ensure that your vehicle has a properly installed spark arrester that is operational; stop and park only in areas clear of vegetation; and observe all fire restrictions. Take precautions, but always be prepared: carry a shovel, bucket and fire extinguisher. Also remember that cross country travel is not allowed on most federal and state lands.

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As summer heats up, additional restrictions may be put in place to help protect public safety, personal property, and natural resources. In the seven-county area surrounding Billings, such restrictions are coordinated through the Billings Area Restrictions Group, which includes representatives from federal, state and local agencies. The group works to ensure that any fire restrictions placed in the area are not only warranted, but that they are also consistent and easy to understand.

To help ease demands on fire personnel and equipment, protect public safety, and preserve natural resources and property, please take extra precautions and honor all fire restrictions. For more information about fire restrictions and prevention, or for tips on how to create defensible space around your home, contact Lisa Osborn, Fire Prevention Specialist, at (406) 657-6200, ext. 224, or your county fire warden.

